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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Wednesday, May 27, 1931

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHATS

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Warm-Weather Clothes for the Baby." Information approved by the Childrens Bureau, U. S. Dept. of Labor.

Bulletins available: "Infant Care" and "Keeping the Well Baby Well." Order from the Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Labor.

A young homemaker out in Kansas is responsible for our topic today. She wrote me a letter and the minute I read it I said to myself, "My very next talk is going to be on clothes for babies--babies in Kansas and elsewhere."

The writer of this letter tells me that she has been a faithful follower of these talks every day and has found in them a lot to help her in the job of homemaking. But, she adds that one subject has been neglected lately. No talks have discussed that most important person--the small baby in the family.

"You've told us about clothes for children and clothes for their mothers. Now I'd like to know what clothes to plan for the well-dressed infant this summer."

I appreciated that letter. My memory needed some jogging. Far be it from me to forget that prominent personage, the baby--especially the new baby. And it certainly is time to talk about dressing him for warm weather.

The small person a few months old used to have a most uncomfortable time of it in summer. Even the best and most sensible of mothers had an idea that babies needed to be kept in woolens and covered with blankets even in sweltering weather. Wool shirts were worn the year around. So were wool stockings and long, very long, flannel petticoats. While the rest of the family were dressed in thinnest clothing and were trying to keep cool by fanning themselves and drinking cold lemonade, the baby had to get along as best he could, bundled up as if ^{he} were in the Arctic.

Well, I'm glad to say that styles for babies have changed. And that old tradition of bundling-up in hot weather has been discarded. In place of the woolen shirt, cotton undergarments are now most widely used. They are easily laundered, don't irritate tender skins and are not too warm for summer.

Another uncomfortable style that babies had to endure a generation ago was long dresses. The new baby's wardrobe was usually provided with a big supply of dresses, slips and petticoats--yards long. It's a wonder any of us ever learned to move our feet and legs, hampered as we were with all that

weight of material just when we needed to practice kicking. Today's baby doesn't have to spend the first part of his life in those long dresses. He wears short dresses that just cover his feet--dresses about 20 to 24 inches long. From these first frocks he progresses directly to the romper outfits for creeping.

It is a pity that Baby Bunting has nothing to say about his own wardrobe. What tales he could tell of uncomfortable clothing, fussily cut and badly made. Of all kinds of collars and fancy bibs around his neck. Of dress fabric that becomes stiffer and stiffer with each successive laundering. Of hot woolen garments for midsummer. And all lumped under him so that the only thing to do is to express his discomfort by wailing.

"Don't talk to me about style," says Mr. Baby. "I abhor style. Comfort is my long suit. And comfort means simplicity in materials and in cut, finish, and decoration. Of course, my mother wants me to have pretty clothes. That's all right with me, so long as the clothes are simple. But tucks, bows, frills and elaborate fancy embroidery, I despise. Around my neck such decorations are especially uncomfortable. If you only know how my tender chin suffers when it has to rub on colored embroidery. And frills and gathers around my neck always get in my mouth. Give me a roomy, comfortable frock with an easy neck-size, finished perfectly flat with perhaps just a tiny edge of soft lace for the sake of appearance."

Thanks to the clothing specialists and the child care experts, better styles in baby garments are being recommended today. And modern mothers don't bundle their infants up. I dislike that old-fashioned "bundling-up" idea at any time of year. It is likely to mean overheating and so many layers of garments that the baby inside can scarcely move. Babies need freedom to grow and to exercise their arms, legs and lungs. Improper clothing may interfere with circulation, breathing or digestion.

In warm weather, light-weight cool clothes are best and those which allow sunlight to reach the skin directly. Though enough garments should be used to keep the small body warm, the baby should never be dressed so that he becomes overheated and perspires. This not only makes him uncomfortable, but may result in a chill later, if he is taken into a colder place or is in a draft. It is a mistake also to dress the baby too warmly for his outdoor airings. When he comes back inside, his garments will be damp, from perspiration and he may actually be colder indoors than out.

If you want your youngest to be comfortable, make his clothing simple and easy to wash. Adapt it to the climate and the season, and to the temperature of the house. Provide light-weight garments for summer. For the hottest weather, only the band and the diaper need be worn. And suit the clothing to the baby's age and condition. Very small or frail babies lie still a great deal and need to be watched carefully to be sure they are warm enough. But many hale and hearty active babies suffer from being dressed too warmly.

How to tell when the baby is wearing too many clothes? If he perspires continually and if his body feels moist, that is evidence enough. So take off that extra blanket or sweater. Any baby who is hot is likely to be restless and fretful.

If you have your pencils within reach, you may want to jot down these few pointers as reminders when you select or make your baby's wardrobe.

First, choose garments that are loose but not so bulky as to wrinkle.

Second, choose garments of soft material with no irritating embroidery or seams and be sure they are soft around the neck.

Third, avoid fussy frills, ruffles and bows.

Fourth, don't provide too large a layette for the new baby. He will soon outgrow his first clothes. It is economy to buy clothes in size 2 rather than size 1, because the baby will not grow out of these so rapidly.

Fifth, choose shirts and bands of knitted material, because these allow the baby freedom to move and grow.

But there. Some other day I mean to go into the subject of the baby's underwear. Just now we have a menu to give and a very few minutes left to talk about it.

Before I start on the dinner for today, however, I do want to mention that there is a list, a very practical and useful list, of correct clothing for the new baby in the bulletin called "Infant Care". Look on page 36. The following pages go into detail about those first articles of clothing.

The whole-family dinner that the Menu Specialist has planned for today features spring onions on toast. That sounds awfully good to me, but I'll have to confess that I haven't tried this dish yet. I mean to tomorrow night, however. In the meantime several people who have eaten it tell me that it is delicious. And the Menu Specialist suggests that it is especially suitable for the children.

Here's the menu: Hard-Cooked Eggs in Tomato Sauce; Spring Onions on Toast; Potatoes; and, for dessert, Rhubarb Betty.

We leave it to you how to serve those potatoes. I shouldn't be surprised if we had them baked at our house. But you can fix them boiled or creamed or even mashed, if you prefer, and they'll still be good for the children. As for the dessert, that's the rhubarb Betty that I discussed at such length two weeks ago. Turn to the pudding and dessert section of your notebook and there you'll find the recipe as you wrote it down.

Now for those spring onions and how to serve them on toast. Allow six or seven finger-sized onions for each serving and trim off the green tops. Cook the onions until tender in lightly salted boiling water in an uncovered vessel. It will take only about 20 minutes for these fresh, young onions. When they have cooked tender, drain, add more salt if needed, and season with melted butter or other fat. In the meantime toast slices of bread. Arrange the onions so that they lie parallel on the toast like asparagus and serve them at once.

Thursday - "Shopping for Window Shades."

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